

NSC BRIEFING

8 February 1955

MALENKOV "RESIGNATION"

- I. The "resignation" of Georgi Malenkov from post of Prime Minister of the USSR is the climactic event in a lengthy and trying period during which intelligence community has been examining every available scrap of evidence concerning his possible eclipse under the rise of Khrushchev's star.
  - A. We had noted Khrushchev's increasing activity in recent months, as he made authoritative pronouncements on all aspects Soviet policy. We found noteworthy Malenkov's silence during same period.
  - B. Added evidence of Malenkov's eclipse was fact that, up to hour of his dramatic public downfall, his name had not been mentioned in any discussions of Supreme Soviet. Khrushchev, in contrast, had been lauded many times.
  - C. There is little doubt, after Tuesday's drama, that Khrushchev is today the most influential Soviet leader--although still not absolute master of USSR a'la Stalin.
    1. His paramount position underlined by fact that he personally nominated new Premier, Marshal Nikolai Bulganin.
- II. The appointment of Bulganin--former Minister of Defense--as Prime Minister continues the facade of "collective" leadership.
  - A. Although Bulganin is a "political general," his long association with top military professionals have acquainted him with their viewpoints.

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B. Thus, his appointment will emphasize, both to the Soviet public and particularly to the Western World, fact that Soviet military leadership is lined up behind the regime and that military considerations are an important element in Soviet policy planning.

C. Bulganin's status, however, probably will be far lower than Khrushchev's.

III. These leadership changes underscore gravity of recent controversies within the Soviet regime.

A. Malenkov's fall probably in part traditional Kremlin struggle for power.

1. His plaintive and humiliating confession of guilt similar to statements made by purged individuals during the early years of Stalin's upward climb. (Bukharin and Rykov in 1934).

2. Despite overtones reminiscent of past purges in Khrushchev's violent language at Central Committee plenum 25-31 Jan, referring to opponents as "right deviationists" and "Bukharinites", Malenkov may retain some stature and political strength. Malenkov is not under arrest, and his assignment to "other duties" has been announced. Got applause on appearance at afternoon session Supreme Soviet following morning "resignation."

B. Key element in Malenkov's downfall, however, probably close identification with "new course" policy line which the collective regime no longer fully supports.

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1. Resignation climaxes six weeks of controversy over orientation of Soviet economy in light of tense international situation.
2. Khrushchev identified with settlement of dispute in favor of heavy industry, increased emphasis on defense expenditures, and a modest retrenchment in consumer benefits program.

IV. Further changes in Soviet domestic or foreign policies unlikely to result immediately as result Malenkov's fall.

- A. Length of time during which we have observed signs of decline in Malenkov's authority suggests that he may not have controlled Soviet domestic and foreign policy for some weeks or months.
- B. Therefore, we expect a continuation of recently confirmed economic policies (stressing heavy industry and some step-up in defense). This, of course, is switch from "new course" policies with which Malenkov identified.
- C. Internally, since the new #1, Khrushchev, has taken a more truculent and dogmatic stand on domestic policies in public speeches and interviews than did Malenkov, we expected that any evolution in such policies over coming months will be towards hardness.
- D. In foreign policy, we expect Khrushchev to follow the basic Soviet policy of trying to isolate the US and destroy western unity. As recently as his interview with Hearst

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(5 Feb), he reaffirmed the main lines of the post-Stalin "coexistence" policy. Within the context of "coexistence" however, we can expect the Kremlin to put greater stress on the dangers of general war, which the Soviet leaders claim to be implicit in US policy.

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